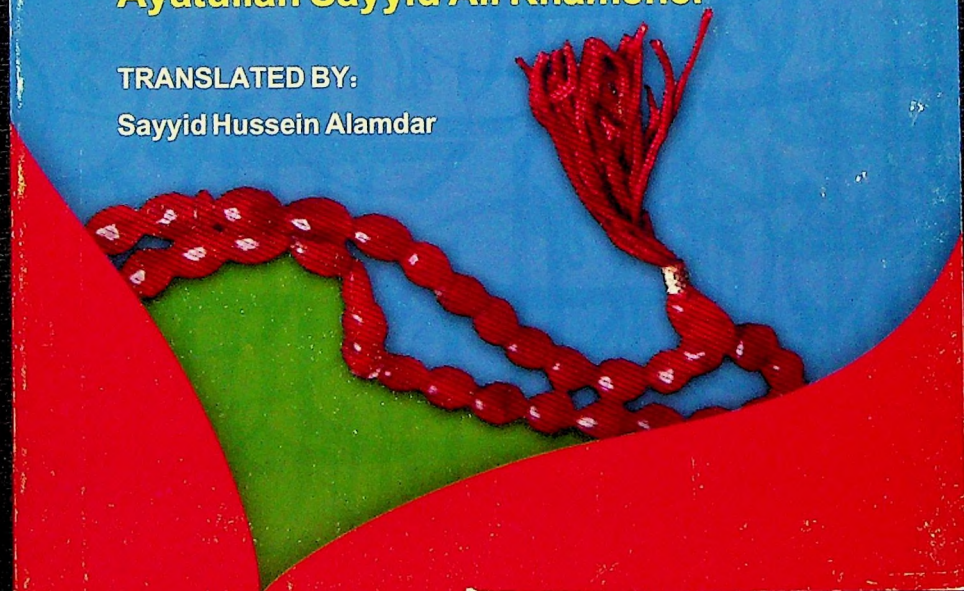
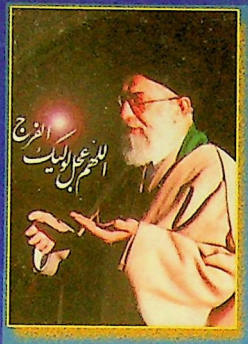
وَاسْتَعِينُوا بِالصَّبْرِ وَالصَّلَاةِ

PROFOUNDITIES OF THE PRAYER

LECTURES OF:
Ayatullah Sayyid Ali Khamenei

TRANSLATED BY:
Sayyid Hussein Alamdar





از ژرفای نماز

مقام معظم رهبری

حضرت آیت ا... خامنه ای (مدظله)

"There is no other permanent and stronger link between man and God Almighty than the Prayer. The most elementary beginners start their relationship with God Almighty by means of Prayer. Also, the most prominent saintly personalities seek their paradise of solitude with their Beloved during Prayer. This treasurer of remembrance and mysteries does not have limits; whoever penetrates deeper into it, is bestowed more enlightenment.

Our people, our society, and specially our youths, who carry the heavy load of trust upon their shoulders, should consider prayer as an indestructible source of power. They must energize themselves with the remembrance of God and prayer to stand against the forces of corruption, injustice, and perverseness, which are threatening humanity today.

The struggle we are facing today, more than ever and more than all others, makes us more dependent upon the powerful support of remembrance of God Almighty, and be hopeful and confident upon His help and support. The Prayer is such a mountainhead which bestows this hope, confidence, and spiritual strength upon us.

— Abstract from a speech of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatullah Sayyid Ali Khamenei delivered on October 8, 1991 in Tehran

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PROFOUNDITIES
Of THE PRAYER

LECTURES OF
Ayatullah Sayyid Ali Khamenei

TRANSLATED FROM THE PERSIAN
with annotation and a preface by
Sayyid Hussein Alamdar

EDITED BY
Asghar Hashembeiki

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IN THE NAME OF ALLAH

THE BENEFICENT, THE MERCIFUL

بِسْمِ اللّهِ الرَّحْمنِ الرَّحِيمِ

"In the Name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful"

The present book is a summarized version of some short sermons delivered after the nightly congregational prayers, at the Karamat Mosque in Mashhad by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatullah Sayyid Ali Khamenei in the year 1972. The Persian book *"Az-Zharfai-Namaz"*, which is the basis of our translation was published by *Daftar-e-Nashr Farhang-e-Islami*, Tehran.

« وَالذّينَ يمسكون بالْكِتابِ وَاَقامو االصّلٰوةَ اِنّالانُضيعُ
اَجْرَالْمُصْلِحينَ »

"And as for those, who hold fast by the book and establish prayer, surely we never let the reward of righteous be perished."

(The Holy Qurân 7: 170)

« گفت پیغمبر، رکوع است و سجود
بر در حق کوفتن، حلقه ی وجود
حلقه ی آن در، هر آن کو می زند
بهر او دولت، سری بیرون کند»

The Prophet (p.b.u.h) had said:

Knocking of the gate of providence, with the entire inner existence is only possible through the genuflexion (Rukoo) and Prostration (Sojood).

Whoever succeeds in knocking this heavenly gate will receive all the wealth and prosperity instantaneously.

Molavi*

*** Molavi:** Molana Jalaluddin Mohammad (604-672 A.H.), son of Mohammad bin Khatibi famous as Baha-ud-din was the most famous scholar & mystic poet of Iran. Also his father was a great scholar & mystic of his time.

He received his early education under the tutorship of his learned father, and later on after his father's demise, continued his studies under

the famous scholar Burhanuddin Mohaqeq Tirmizi. The later encouraged him to pursue his higher studies at the prestigious literary learning center in Damascus.

Molana met with shams Tabrizi in 642 A.H. This meeting has a tremendous impact upon him, and brought a great spiritual revolution in his personality. His most famous mystical poetry works are:

1- *Mathnavi,* consists of six volumes, containing 26000 verses of poetry, describing the religious and gnostic sublime realities in a simple language.

2. *Divan-e-Kabir,* consisting of 50,000 mystical verses is another literary mystical masterpiece left by Molana. (Tr.)

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Preface

We are witnessing the most turbulent period of this so-called modern civilization, in which the world order is rapidly changing. Until recently there used to be an Eastern Superpower, the mighty U.S.S.R. (Union of Soviet Socialist Republic), which proclaimed communism as a dynamic revolutionary ideology. Suddenly it disappeared from the world scene, without a single bullet or a missile fired from outside.

Its downfall resembles the drowning of mighty *Pharaoh.* The *Holy Qur'ân* narrates the story of the downfall of Pharaoh, for whom nothing in the universe shed a single tear. Similar was the fate with the eastern superpower, which oppressed and massacred millions of innocent people during its rein of terror, and its futile war against the existence of Almighty Creator and against divine religions.

Like the Eastern Oppressor and its Communistic ideology, Western Arrogance and its racist and Capitalist ideology has also failed to deliver the promised paradise for mankind, and

instead has led humanity to a point of no return. Without the least doubt, man made systems and ideologies are helpless to guide this lost caravan of humanity. It is only God Almighty and His divine system, which could rescue this lost caravan, and guide it towards the straight path of absolute perfection and exaltation.

For centuries Islam has remained a stranger even for Muslims because the adverse propaganda of the world devouring imperialistic forces. The vast financial and economic resources of the Islamic world were looted by the colonialists. The Islamic countries were economically and culturally exploited with direct intervention in their internal affairs. Fortunately, with the victory of the Islamic Revolution on February 11, 1979 under the enlightened leadership of that sage of the age, whose name and whose word inspires the hearts of Muslims, Imam Ruhollah al-Musavi al-Khomeini (R.A.), the task of creating an Islamic state was accomplished.

As long as Islamic Iran remains the *"Ummul Qura"* or the center of Islam, with its flag of God's majesty flying high, the more than one-billion-strong Islamic Ummah will remain awaken, and fresh blood will be pumped into its veins and arteries. Today, the people are demanding the implementation of Islamic laws in Bosnia Herzegovina, Algeria, Kashmir, Turkey, Egypt, Sudan, Palestine, Chechan, Tajikistan, and throughout the world. This spread of 'Islamic Fundamentalism' as the terrified west, likes to call, has taken away the sleep of the Zionist occupiers of Palestine and has turned their dreams into nightmares.

So the war goes on against Islamic ideology. Sometimes destroying an entire country like Bosnia, where systematic genocide is going on for the last three years. At other times it

takes the form of the planned demolition of Babri Mosque in Uttar Pradesh province of India (December 6, 1992), or most recently the cold blooded butchering of hundreds of innocent fasting Muslims in the state of prostration while offering Friday-Prayer, during the holy month of Ramadhan, inside the shrine of Prophet Abraham (p.b.u.h.) in the city of al-Khalil.

Why the enemy is so scared of the Mosque and Prayer? Why does it indulge in such atrocities at the sanctified places of worships? The answer is obvious. The forces of darkness are simply scared of the shining of Islam and its enlightening effects on the human race. *Salat* or the five-times-a-day prayer is the most profound manifestation of the universal brotherhood of Islam. Since there is a need to introduce the importance of profoundities of this pillar of faith to the English speaking sections of the Ummah, I have attempted the translation of the present book "Profoundities of Prayer" *(Az-Zharfai-Namaz)* by Ayatullah Sayyid Ali Khamenei from Persian into English, as my insignificant contribution for the understanding of this most important obligation of Islam.

Prayer in Islam can be divided into four basic forms. *Salaat* (ritual prayer), *dua* (supplication), *wird* (litany) and *dhikr* (invocation).One can say that the first in its mandatory form may slightly be compared to what is implied in Christianity as mass or holy communion, although this type of prayer in Islam is unique and cannot be compared to anything else. The second *dua* (supplication) is equivalent to personal prayer or simply prayer as Christians generally used the term.

The mandatory ritual prayer must be performed personally or in communion five times a day and according to strictly defined rules. Recommended prayers *(nawafil)* also follow the same pattern of ritual prayers. But on the other hand one may

supplicate God at any time and in any circumstances, without any set pattern or formulae. Supplications are voluntary and informal. Litanies and invocations i.e. the recitation of Qur'ânic verses or one or more of the Names of God, like supplication are optional.

The present book deals with the ritual prayer and describes its inner-depths in a special manner. Apart from its outer ritualistic format the prayer has inner mysteries of infinite dimensions. It is like the fathomless water of the ocean one could only utilize from it according to his need or capacity. On the Day of Judgement, the inhabitants of Hell will be asked: "What has brought you into hell. They shall say: We were not of those who prayed."*

The most important thing in Prayers is sincerity, pure intention, and presence of heart since one is formally present before the Lord Almighty. The *Holy Qur'ân* says: "So woe to the praying ones who are heedless at their Prayers."** Therefore during performance of daily prayers, to control thoughts and to achieve the presence of heart and mind strictly for God instead of getting preoccupied in worldly affairs is very crucial. In order for the prayer to be meaningful and to be accepted by God it is very important that the gates of exit towards al the external ideas should be thoroughly closed during prayers. Of course achieving the above state of mind and heart requires a lot of patience and endeavour.

If a person is submerged in love and desires of this world, naturally his heart would be fully enmeshed in mundane affairs. So far he has this tree of worldly ambitions and desires inside him the heart will behave like a bird jumping from

* The *Holy Qur'an* (74: 42-43)

** Ibid. (107:4-5)

branch to branch during prayer. If by struggle, practice, efforts, and thinking about the severe consequences and losses, one could succeed in cutting this tree of worldly ambitions or desires, then the heart will become reposed and peaceful. It will achieve the station of spiritual perfection.

At least the more one tries to free himself from worldly charms, the more he succeeds in cutting various branches of that tree, and the more presence of heart will be achieved proportionally. As far as love of this world is concerned, there are people who do not possess any thing at all but still could be persons totally submerged into the love of this world. While on the contrary one may be like Prophet Solomon, king of kings and possessing all the treasures of this universe, but at the same time may not be a man of this world .completely detached from the charms and love of this worldly existence.

It is narrated from various authentic sources that if one could offer only two *Rakat* of prayer in one's lifetime with complete devotion, sincerity, and presence of mind, the Lord-Almighty will accept it and will bless him with paradise. Regarding prostration, it is narrated that during one's entire life if one succeeds during a single prostration to achieve a real union with the Creator, it will compensate for all the past omissions. He would receive divine blessings and would become immune from the Satanic temptations forever.

On the contrary if during prostration, which is the state of renunciation if his heart is preoccupied with any thing other than Him, he will be listed among the group of hypocrites and the misled. One should seek refuge in God from the tricks of Satan and his own self, while in the presence of Lord Almighty on the Day of Judgement.

In order to emphasize the importance of prayer in linking

a weak helpless, poor, worthless, earthly creature, with the most Supreme Source of Power, we may quote the following two authentic narrations:

« اَطِعنی حَتّی اَجْعَلَكَ مِثْلی. »

The God Almighty says: "Oh my servant! obey me, so that I could make you like my ownself."

—The Mysteries of Prayers by Maliki Tabrizi p.4

And the following tradition narrates:

« لا یزالُ الْعَبْدُ یَتَقَرَّبُ اِلَیَّ بِالنَّوافِلِ حَتّی اُحِبَّهُ، فَاذا اَحبَبْتُهُ كُنْتُ سَمْعَهُ الَّذِیْ یَسْمَعِ بِهِ وَ بَصَرَهُ الَّذِیْ یَبْصُرُبِهِ وَیَدَه اَلَّذیْ یَبْطِشُ بِها... »

"By performance of optional (nawafil) prayers, my servant becomes so much nearer to me that I start liking him. When this happens, I become his ears, with whom he hears, become his eyes with whom he sees, and become his hands with whom he does things.....etc."

— The Mysteries of Prayers by Maliki Tabrizi p.5

The more one succeeds in achieving perfection in obedience to God the more his acts and deeds would begin to reflect superior heavenly characteristic, and of course these stations of perfection and exaltation are achieved by being sincere in prayer which has been called as: ***Salat is the heavenly journey of a believer.***

In the end this translation coincides with the tragic news of massacre of hundreds of innocent fasting Muslims during

the very act of Prayer inside the Holy Shrine of Prophet Abraham in the city of al-Khalil by the savage Zionists. Therefore, it is befitting to dedicate this translation to the lofty spirits of the martyrs of al-Khalil.

I wish to thank all of those who have contributed to the realization of this translation, especially Ayatullah Amini the learned scholar & jurisprudent from the Religious Learning Center of Qum, Dr. Ali Naqi BaqerShahi & Mr. Ansariyan for their support and encouragement. I am sincerely indebted to Mr. Asghar Hashembeiki for editing & proof reading the text; Hujjatul Islam Sayyid Mohammad Taqi Hakim for proof reading the Arabic; and Mrs. Irafan Parviz for taking the pains for type-setting the text. The notes added by the translator have been indicated by (Tr.) For any errors of commission, I take responsibility.

Sayyid Hussein Alamdar
Tehran
Ramadhan 1414/March 1994

Biography of Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Khamenei

The leader of the Islamic Revolution of Iran

He was born in the year 1939 in the holy city of Mashhad in Khorasan province, Northeastern Iran. Both his parents belonged to religious scholarly families and he spent his childhood years in a spiritual atmosphere. He successfully completed his theological studies at the famous Religious Learning Center of Qum in the year 1964 and subsequently pursued religious studies at the Theological Academy at Mashhad till the year 1968.

During the deposed Pahlavi regime Mr. Khamenei was one of the most beloved and bright pupils of Imam Khomeini (r.a), and was considered to be one of the most prominent and

trusted leaders of the Islamic movement, which entered into a new critical phase on the 5th June 1963 (15th of Khordad 1342 S.H.), after Imam Khomeini's historical stand against the Shah's regime. During this struggle he was repeatedly arrested and spent three years in prison between 1964 and 1978. Later he was exiled for almost a year to a place with one of the worst climatic conditions.

In 1978, upon his return from exile and at the height of the revolutionary struggle of Iranian Muslims, Mr. Khamenei together with a few of his close associates led the struggle of the people in Khorasan. Later in the same year when Imam Khomeini headed the Islamic revolutionary movement from Neauphle Le Chateau at Paris, he was selected to be a member of the Revolutionary Council. After the downfall of the monarchy and formation of the revolutionary government, he was entrusted with the responsibility of representing the Revolutionary Council in the Army. He also served as Deputy for Revolutionary Affairs at the Ministry of Defence, and later on was appointed as the Commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC).

He was also chosen to lead the Friday Congregational Prayers in Tehran, by the leader of the Islamic Revolution Imam Khomeini, and was elected to the First Islamic Consultative Assembly, as the representative of Tehran in 1980. After the formation of the Supreme Defence Council, Mr. Khamenei was nominated to be the representative of the Leader of the Revolution. Mr. Khamenei was one of the founding members of the Islamic Republic Party in Iran and was appointed as its first Secretary-General.

He was the victim of an un-successful assassination attempt on 27 June 1981. His speech at the Consultative Assem-

bly was instrumental in the dismissal of Bani-Sadr From the presidency of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and while addressing the congregation after leading the prayer in a mosque in Tehran, a time bomb exploded nearby, seriously injuring his hand, face and chest. He was immediately rushed to hospital by the devoted people of Tehran and miraculously survived. His right hand, however, is still not functioning properly.

In 1981, following the martyrdom of Mr. Mohammad Ali Rajaei, the second President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, he became a candidate, and was elected to the Presidency with 95% of the votes cast in his favour by the Iranian people (the total number of votes was 16,847,717). He was re-elected as President in 1985 for a second four-year term. He also headed the Supreme Defence Council and Supreme Council for the Cultural Revolution.

During the imposed war, President Khamenei visited various war fronts, and continously inspected the frontlines in order to boost the morale of the Islamic combatants and to give advise on organizational matters. After the sad death of Imam Khomeini, the Father of the Islamic Revolution, the Assembly of Experts selected him as the next Leader of the Islamic Revolution, on June 4, 1989.

He has a good command of the Persian, Arabic, and Azeri Turkish languages and is also well acquainted with English. Ayatollah Khamenei is a prominent scholar and jurisprudent, and could be ranked as one of most fluent orators in the Islamic World at present. In addition to writing, he has a sense of appreciation for literary and poetic works.

He has translated and written numerous books on Islam and History. His translations include *Future of the Islamic Lands, An Indictment Against the Western Civilization,* and

Imam Hasan's Peace Treaty. From among his writings, one may mention: *The Role of Muslims in the Independence Struggle of India, General Pattern of Islamic Thoughts in the Qur'ân, Discourse on Patience, Understanding Islam Properly, Imam Sadiq's Life, Profoundities of the Prayer,* and *a collection of lectures about Vilayat.* He was also a co-writer of the famous pamphlet *Our Positions* which helped the political, social and philosophical advancement of the Islamic Republic Party. (Other contributers were Martyr Ayatollah Beheshti, Martyr Hujjatul Islam Dr. Bahonar, and Hujjatul Islam Hashemi Rafsanjani).

Chapter — 1

Philosophy of the Prayer (Salat) in Islam

Prayer and Praise are the most intimate communications between man and God, between the creature and the Creator. Prayer bestows comfort and tranquillity to the exhausted, restless and disturbed hearts, and is the essence of inner purification and illumination for the human soul.

It is a commitment, motivation for action, mobilization, and announcement for readiness in a most sincere manner, far from any deceit or delusion, for negation of all kinds of wickedness, indecency, and affirmation of every goodness and beauty. It is a programme for discovering the self, and subsequently to build it up spiritually, or in nutshell, it is a continuous beneficial relationship with the fountainhead of all goodness i.e. God Almighty.

Why is prayer considered the most important and prime obligation? Why has prayer been described as the foundation

and basis of faith? Why without prayer nothing will be acceptable? In order to find these answers, let us analyze and evaluate various dimensions and aspects of prayer. To start with, it would be appropriate to focus on the aims and objectives behind human creation, which is regarded as one of the main axis within the world view of Islamic Ideology.

If a man is a created being, and if we believe that a powerful and wise hand, brought him into being, then it is natural to think that there must be some aims and objectives behind this creation and existence. This aim may be called as, measuring, a road which leads to the final destination or God; traveling that road, according to the exact map and specified means, so as to eventually reach the desired final destination.

In this case it is necessary to identify the road which leads towards the final destination, determine the route, and always keep in mind the aim in order to achieve the desired result. The one who starts this journey must walk straight ahead; should continuously keep in mind the final destination; should not be distracted by diversions on the road; or lose attention to futile activities; also in order to continue, maintain the correct position in the specified direction, and not deviate from the guidelines, prescribed by his Leader (i.e.. Prophet [S.A.]).

That aim, is a step toward exaltation and infinite perfection by man. It is a return to God and to virtuous qualities. The discovering of the innate power and potential within himself; and the utilizing of them on the righteous path, for his own welfare, that of fellow human beings, and the entire world. Therefore, we must identify the existence of God, and the path which has been prescribed by Him for the exaltedness of human beings, and must move in that direction, without hesitation and lethargy.

To undertake the works, which lead man closer to the goal, disassociate with things which are injurious and harmful, and assign meaning to life, such should be the philosophy of life, otherwise life becomes useless without any content. In other words, life is like a class or laboratory, where we have to act in accordance with the laws and formulas, which have been prescribed for us by God, the Creator of the world and all life, in order to achieve and accomplish the desired best results.

We must identify these laws, divine traditions and the laws of creation, and mould our lives according to them. Therefore, one must first identify his own self, and its needs, which is regarded as one of the great responsibilities and obligations of a humanbeing. It is only after the dischargement of this great obligation that a humanbeing would be able to move forward conscientiously and with success, otherwise he would be regarded as idle, ignorant and a failure.

Religion not only determines the goal, direction, the ways and means of the journey, but also bestows upon human beings the necessary power, and provision for undertaking the journey on the road towards perfection; of course, the most important provisions, which is carried by the travellers on this road is nothing but the "remembrance of God".

The powerful wings of this flight are quest, hope and confidence, which are the result of the same "remembrance of God". On one hand it makes us aware of the goal of attaching ourselves to Him, the Absolute Perfection and at same time prevents deviations, and keeps the traveller alert and cautious regarding the ways and means. On the other hand, it bestows courage, happiness, and confidence upon him and protects him from distractions and frustrations, when faced with harsh and adverse circumstances.

The Islamic society, and each group or individual, could move forward with certainty on this trail charted by Islam and blazed out by all prophets, without breaking journey or returning from midway, only if they do not forget the remembrance of God. Therefore, it is because of this consideration that religion tries its best, by suggesting various ways and means to keep alive the remembrance of God in the hearts of believers at all times.

One such act, which is fully saturated with the motivation of remembrance of God, and which enables man to submerge himself completely in it,makes him aware and self discovering, and which acts as a signpost of the straight course for those traversing the path of God, prevents them from labyrinths, and stands in the way of negligence is. nothing but prayer.

Man, because of his preoccupations does not have the opportunity to think or ponder about himself, on the aim of life, and about the passage of moments, hours, and days. It is very often that days pass into nights, a new day begins, and weeks and months pass by without man having a chance to realize about the passage of time, its meanings, and its sheer waste.

Prayer is like a siren for awakening, a warning at different hours of the day and night, which provides a programme for man, and requires his commitment for its execution, thus, bestowing meanings to days and nights and making him accountable for the passing moments. When a man is immersed in his wordly affairs, without paying any attention to the passage of time, and the creeping of age, prayer summons him and makes him understand that a day has passed, and a new day has begun.

He must act by assuming a greater responsibility by performing an important task, because a portion of life has already been spent. Therefore one must try harder, and should take giant steps forward because the aim is lofty — till there is an opportunity, one should try to achieve it before it is too late.

On the other hand to forget the goal and direction under the pressures of the day-to-day life or material involvement is a natural and obvious thing. The possibility to review all the obligations assigned to man, in order to accomplish the desired goal, during each day is rather difficult and almost impossible. In addition to that, sufficient time for reviewing all the requirements and ideals of the school of Islam, which bestow exaltedness and prosperity to the human life, never exists and such an opportunity never arises. Prayer in itself contains the condensed summary of all the principles of this school; because the words, the calculated and most organized harmonious movements which exist in it; the prayer indeed may rightly be called as the total manifestation of Islam. Or, in other words, we may compare prayer with the national anthem of a country, of course with some difference in meanings and other parameters.

A country, in order to make its principles and ideals permanently recorded in minds and thoughts of its citizens, and to keep alive their patriotism towards that ideology, composes a national anthem, containing a summary of those ideals, and makes its recital compulsory. The repeted recital of national anthem becomes a means, to make its citizens to remain committed to those ideals, as well as a reminder for them that they are the citizens of that country and defenders of those ideals composed therein. Otherwise, forgetting those

principles and ideals would mean, that they have deviated from them, and are no longer committed to them in their lives.

Therefore, this repetition makes them ready and available for work and service for their country, teaches them the relevant methodology, assigns them responsibilities and obligations, keeps alive the principles in their minds, assists them in their duties, and finally nurtures in them the courage and power of action to discharge their duties successfully.

Like a national anthem for a country, prayer in nutshell is a total summary of the Islamic ideology which explicitly defines the path of a Muslim, and clearly indicates all the responsibilities, obligations, ways, and results. It is prayer which summons a Muslim at the beginning of a day, during mid day, at evening; and makes him understand the principles, direction, goals, and results by his own tongue, encouraging him for action by bestowing upon him spiritual strength.

It is prayer which step by step directs the believer to reach the peak of perfection, consisting of belief and action, and makes out of him a precious object i.e. an ideal perfect Muslim. It is because of these characteristics that the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) has called the prayer: *a ladder of a believer, carrying him higher up towards the heavens.*

Man has a difficult and lengthy road ahead of him, a road which leads him towards real righteousness and prosperity. To travel on this road of perfection has been the primordial aim of man's creation and existence. But what he is confronted with, is not this single road alone, rather he has to avoid obscure and narrow lanes, diversions, and dangerous paths that abound just near the main straight road. Sometimes these paths are so tempting and full of attractions that a traveller becomes easily confused and selects the wrong route by mistake.

Therefore, to avoid these pitfalls, a traveller has to stick to the original programme i.e. to ascertain the correct direction, and march forward towards the cherished aim and ultimate destination (movement towards God), by following the prescribed map showing the path, and the goal. Prayer is nothing other than a constant attention towards God and a detailed map showing the main path. It is a channel providing a permanent contact and firm link with God Almighty because it contains a complete summary of Islamic thoughts in its rituals.

With the above discussion, it therefore becomes explicit that what the reason is behind prescribing prayers five times a day and to what extent it is crucial? It may be compared like the food requirement of human body at different intervals during a 24-hour period. Apart from the fact that prayer contains a total summary of all the Islamic aims and ideals, and since recital of the *Holy Qur'ân* is compulsory during its rituals, naturally prayer makes the offerer familiar with a portion of the text of the *Holy Qur'ân** and thus encourages him to ponder and think about the meanings of the Holy Book; which gradually becomes his habit. The movements which are prescribed in the prayer is a complete and total reflection of Islam in a miniature form.

In a social system, Islam incorporates the body, mind and soul of human beings and puts them to work, to produce prosperity and happiness for them. The same thing is accomplished exactly when one offers prayers, because all three namely: body, mind, and soul are put to work and involvement

* انما امر الناس بالقرائة فى الصلوة لئلايكون القرآن مهجوراً مصيعاً وتكون مدروسا فلايضمحل ولايجهل.

This tradition is narrated by Fazal bin Shazan, quoted from Imam Ali bin Mousa al-Rida (A.S.)

as follows:

Body: The hands, feet, and tongue, are all in motion as prayer requires three postures of standing, genuflexion and prostration.

Mind: Thinking about the contents and wordings of prayer which normaly is an indication about the aims and means; and it is like completion of a short course about the method of thinking in Islamic ideology.

Soul: Remembrance of God, and spiritual flight towards the sublime higher plains, by cutting all the worldly adventures of heart into numerous nonsenses and amusements, and trying to achieve the presence of heart by concentration, as well as to nourish the seeds of humility and fear of God Almighty in man's soul.

It is an accepted fact that the prayer of each religion or ideology reflect a condensed summary of that particular school of thought. The similar is true with the prayer in Islam i.e. it combines, soul and body, material and meaning,world and hereafter,in words, context, and in motion which is the speciality of the prayer in Islam. A Muslim by offering a complete prayer could utilize all his own energy for achieving exaltation i.e. simultaneously he commissions all the physical & spiritual resources towards this end.

A believer offering prayer, seeking the path of God with total physical and mental power concentration succeeds in overcoming all motives of wickedness, corruption and degradation, making himself immune from all sorts of evil influences. Some of the verses of the *Holy Qur'ân* describe the establishment of prayer as a sign of religiousness, while many other verses put special emphasize for this act. Therefore,it seems that the establishment of prayer goes further deeper

than simply offering the prayer.

It is not sufficient for a believer to simply offer his own prayer, rather he is also responsible to endeavour for accomplishing the aims and goals and follow the path prescribed by it for him, as well as encouraging others to accompany him in that direction. In other words, it seems that offering means that one must do his utmost endeavour for the establishment of God-seeking and God-worshipping environment for himself and others, moving the community collectively forward in the direction of prayer.

Therefore, a believer, or a society of believers by establishing the prayer burns the roots of deviations, sins, and corruptions within themselves and within their social environments, as well as at the same time neutralizes completely all kind of sinful thoughts and internal and external motives of wickedness be individual or collective, whatsoever. Certainly prayer protects the individual as well as a society from all sorts of undesirable and shameful acts.*

During the crucial struggle of life, when devilish forces are completely equipped and mobilized for the destruction of all motives and stimulants of goodness and righteousness within everybody and everywhere, the prime castle which is attacked and destroyed by them consists of man's determination and spiritual strength. Because once this dignified barrier is removed, occupation and destruction of the castle representing human personality — a castle which is the treasure of all inherent nobilities, and accumulation of precious learnings

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* « إِنَّ الصَّلٰوةَ تَنْهٰى عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ. »

"For prayer restrains from shameful and unjust deeds." — The *Holy Quran* (29:45)

and knowledge — becomes possible. Therefore, those who proclaim a fresh and novel message for their period are attacked much more severely than others, and require intensely to defend this irresistable fortification relatively more than others.

The prayer of Islam by inspiration and repetition of remembrance of God connects the limited and vulnerable man to the unlimited and absolute power, and makes him rely upon that source. By linking man to that absolute power, and manager of all universes, bestows upon him infinite and indestructible power, which could be regarded as the most ideal treatment for man's weakness and the most effective medicine inducing determination and strong will. The prophet of Islam at the threshold of great resurrection of Islam, and facing total confrontation with the pagans, felt the heaviest burden of obligations and responsibilities upon his shoulders, was instructed by God Almighty to offer the midnight prayers, *(Namaz-e-Shab)* and praise of God as follows:

«يٰا اَيُّهَاالْمُزَّمِّلُ، قُمِ اللَّيْلَ اِلاّٰقَلِيلاً، نِصْفَهُ اَوِانْقُصْ مِنْهُ قَلِيلاً اَوْزِدْ عَلَيْهِ وَرَتِّلِ الْقُرآنَ تَرْتِيلاً، اِنّا سَنُلْقى عَلَيْكَ قَوْلاً ثَقِيلاً.»

Oh! thou wrapped up in the raiment! Keep vigil the night long save a little or add (a little) thereto and chant the Qur'ān in measure. For we shall charge thee with a word of weight.

—The Holy Qur'an (73: 1-5)

Now, we would review the contents of prayer in a manner without going deep into an expanded translation or interpre-

tation. Efforts will be made to lead the readers one step closer to the aim of prayer. The prayer begins with the name of God and with the remembrance of its glory, the unlimited extent of his essence, and its absolute domination and superiority from the highest point of man's thinking:

« اَللّٰهُ اَكْبَرُ »

"God is Great."

A believer starts his praise with the above sentence, and for a magnificent act, starts an opening chapter saturated with splendour. God is Great — Greater than, whatever could be confined into virtues or qualities. Greater than to be compared with the proclaimers of divinity and godlings throughout the history, and Greater than all the powers and all natural displays and appearance of which a man might be afraid or may be tempted for, and Greater than anybody who could dare to challenge His divine and creational laws. If a servant of God has already recognized these divine traditions, in accordance to them has selected the path, and endeavours in that direction, then with this reminder that "God is the Greatest," gets a tremendous power with in his existence and becomes fully saturated with hope.

With complete assurance he knows that all his efforts have been successful and eventually the end is going to be well. These assurances make him hopeful and satisfied regarding the path he has selected looking ahead for bright future. After announcing this sentence the prayer offerer practically enters into the ritual of the prayer. He must recite the verse of Praise (the Surah Opening) and therafter one complete surah from the *Holy Qur'ân* in the standing state.

Chapter — 2

Surah Al-Hamd

The Opening

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of God, the beneficient and the Merciful

In the name of God, who is the possessor of all blessings and the bestower of everlasting compassion. The above sentence which is the first sentence of all surahs of the Holy Qur'ân* is the opening of the prayer, as well as the begining of all activities and involvements of a Muslim i.e. all works begin only with the name of God, everything belonging to man — the begining of man's life, as well as all manifestations of his being alive are in His name.

A Muslim starts his days and terminates his daily endeav-

* Except the ninth Surah i.e Surah Touba (Repentance) or Barrat (Immunity).

brance, he closes his eyes permanently from this world to become part of the eternity.

«اَلْحَمْدُلِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰالَمِينَ»

"Praise to God, Lord of the worlds." *

All praise and thanks belong specially to Him, because He is the source of all Greatness and Blessings. He is the assembly of all praiseworthy characteristics, all goodness, and righteousness which oazes from the fountainhead of His essence.

Therefore, praise of God means praise of all goodness and righteous deeds. He is the one who assigns direction (or purpose) to all efforts supporting goodness and righteousness. If we observe some praiseworthy characteristics and manners in ourselves, we must consider them as a kindness, favour, and blessing from God Almighty.

Because God has actually incorporated the potential for goodness within the human nature, and has prepared his essence in such a way that he is always seeking the excellence. Also He bestowed upon man the power of self determination as another instrument for performance of righteous and noble deeds. This God given insight not only closes the door for becoming a self-centred and self-conceited being, but also at the same time prevent the wastage and improper

* Al-Fatihah, "The Opening" or Fatihatu'l-Kitab, "The opening of the scripture" or Ummu'l-Qur'ân, "The Essence of the Qur'ân," as it is variously named, has been called the Lord's Prayer of the Muslims. It is an essential part of all Muslim worship, public and private. This Surah is also often called "Saba'an min al-mathani" "Seven of the Oft repeated" ("verses" being understood), S. XV, 87, words which are taken as referring to this Surah. [Tr]

and noble deeds. This God given insight not only closes the door for becoming a self-centred and self-conceited being, but also at the same time prevent the wastage and improper utilization of virtuosity and creative potentials within human nature.

The sentance the Lords of the worlds describes the existence of other worlds and gives a feeling that all these universes and galaxies are interrelated together and forms a single unit. Thus, the believer discovers that apart from this world, and his limited and narrow vision; beyond the boundaries imagined by him for his life, there exist other celestial spheres, universes, galaxies, and God is also the lord of all this magnificient vast kingdom.

This realization, therefore, destroys all sort of narrow-mindedness and shortsightedness feelings and bestows upon him courage and a sense of search. The servitude to God creates a special feeling of pride within him, and by becoming a servant of God, he discovers a special magnificence and splendour around him.

Looking from a different angle he will discover that all creatures, namely humanbeings, animals, plants, stationary objects, skies, and numerous galaxies of the universe, all are in absolute servitude to God Almighty, who is their lord and manages the whole universe. He understands that his God is not only the God of his race, his country, and mankind, but also, belongs to that tiny ant and weak plant as well. He is also God of the heavens, milkyways and stars.

With this realization he discovers that he is not alone, rather is related with all tiny particles of this universe, and with all tiny or large creatures. He is associated and interrelated

with all human kinds, all of them are brothers and fellow-travellers, and this great caravan of humanity is heading for a single goal. This awareness of association, interrelation, and connection makes him obliged and committed with respect to all creatures. Regarding mankind he is responsible for showing commitments, guidances and assistances; while with respect to other creatures, he is committed to their proper identification, and utilization in a proper way in accordance with the divine aim and direction.

«الرَّحْمنِ الرَّحيمِ»

"The Beneficent, the Merciful"

God's general blessing in the from of creative powers the life giving laws and the sources of continuous energies created for the support of universe, surrounds all creatures; and everything and everyone till the last moment require this blessing (Beneficence). On the other side, His special blessing — blessing for guidance and assistance, for rewarding, and affection — belongs to His righteous and pious servants. This special blessing (Merciful) like a lighting route becomes a part of the existences of these precious and decent creatures and remains with them till death, and from death till the resurrection; and the final eternal abode. Thus, God is the bestower of general blessing, which belongs to all but is temporary, and a special blessing belonging to special groups which is permanent and forever.

Therefore, the remembrance of the merciful virtues of God Almighty, in the preface of the *Holy Qur'ân* for the begining of the prayer, and at the begining of each Surah indicates that the affection and benevolence of God is in abundance and

more conspicuous at the scene of creation as compared to His wrath and punishment, which is reserved only for enemies, obstinates, corrupters and criminals; while his blessing surrounds everything all around.*

«مٰالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ»

Owner of the Day of Judgement.

The day of resurrection, is the ultimate conclusion of our actions during our worldly lives. We try our best to have a good end, and aspire to achieve best conclusions. In this struggle both the materialist (without God), and those who believe in God, all in their endeavours search for achieving a good end ultimately. The difference consists that each one has its own interpretation about the conclusion. For a materialist the ultimate end means, next hour, next day, next year or next few years, and ultimately getting old and depreciated with the passage of time, but from the point of view of a believer in God, the ultimate consequences mean much deeper and farther than described above.

From a believer's point of view the world is not confined to limited boundries, rather his future is unlimited, which raises within him infinite hope encouraging him for working hard without ever getting exhausted. Such a person, who never gives up hope, for getting rewarded, and seeing results of his

* وَرَحْمَتِی وَسِعَت کُل شَیئ.

"My mercy embraces all things" — The *Holy Qur'an* (7: 156)

یا من سبقت رحمته غضبه

"Thou whose mercy overtakes your wrath!" — The prayer Masoor

deeds even after dying, may continue his goodly deeds for the sake of pleasure of God with excitement till the very last moment of his life.

The reminder that God Almighty is the absolute owner, and all commands belongs to Him on the Day of Resurrection and rewards, bestows an ability upon the offerer of prayer to walk in the right direction, and makes all his actions and efforts oriented in God's direction. Life and all manifestations for being alive becomes for the sake of God and His path.

Everything belonging to him and all his efforts and actions are utilized in the direction of perfection and excellence of mankind; the only direction pleasing to God. On the other hand, the door of reliance upon false imaginations and unrealistic expectations is closed upon him, and the true hopes for action are induced within his inner existence. If in this world, the wrong systems and deviated corrupt regimes have provided opportunities for the lazy minded elements to be able to engage in plunder and usurpation, without taking any pains or making efforts by simply utilizing deceptions, lies, and fraudulent tactics; in the next world where all efforts are managed and controlled strictly by a wise and just God, such fraud and cheating would be impossible, and no one would be rewarded for things in which he has not participated.

Here the first half of Surah Praise (Opening) which contains the glorification of the Lord of the Worlds, and describes some of the qualities of His essence reaches to its completion. The second half portion which consists of acceptance of servitude (bondness) and need for guidance throws light upon some very important principles of Islamic ideology.

« اِيّاكَ نَعْبُدُ »

"Thee alone we worship — (Thee alone) we ask for help".

All the physical, spiritual, and mental abilities of our existence are at the disposal of God, and are ready for His command and in his direction. The offerer of prayer by declaring this sentence breaks the chain of bondage from other than God, and frees his hands, feet and neck and therefore, rejects the claims of false deities — the arrogant claimers of divinity — who have always been responsible for the creation of upper and lower classes in a society throughout the history, and made majority of the mankind oppressed, deprived, and kept them into the chains of slavery.

The prayer offerer takes himself as well as all other believers in God, further away from the limits of obedience and servitude of anybody other than God Almighty, and any system other than the divine government. In summary, by accepting the servitude of God throws away the servitude of other fellow creatures, and by doing so joins the rank of real disciples of the School of Monotheism.

Admittance and acceptance to the fact that bondage and servitude is permissible only in front of God and only for Him, is one of the most important principle (theoretical as well as practical) of the Islamic ideology and all other divine religions; which means that divinity or providance belongs exclusively to God Almighty, i.e. only He has the right to be worshipped and there is no god but God, and therefore, nobody other than Him should be praised or worshipped.

Unfortunately there were some people whose interpreta-

tion was incorrect and limited, could not understand its meaning properly, and therefore unknowingly become prey to the servitude of other than God. They imagined that worship of God is limited only to praising and adoring Him, and since they offered prayers in the sight of God and only praised Him, by doing so they become convinced that they had worshipped no one other than God.

The knowledge of the comprehensive meaning of worship from the point of view of the *Holy Qur'ân* and traditions would clarify the baselessness of the above mentioned interpretation. In accordance with the terminology of the *Holy Qur'ân* and traditions, worship may be defined as: obedience, surrender, and absolute submission to commands, regulations, and codes issued from holder of authority or center of power, and are imposed upon mankind whether this submission and obedience is accompanied by a sense of praise sanctification or otherwise.

Therefore, in accordance with the above definition, all of those who have surrendered to the regulations, codes, and commands issued by any power other than God become it's worshippers, bondsmen, and manifestations. Inspite of that, if there is still some room left for following the divine commands, and in some parts or some areas in their individual or social lives, they obey the divine laws and ordinances, they will be called as polytheists (i.e. those who in addition to worshipping God also worship some others); and if nothing is left for God, they are called unbelievers (i.e. those who do not see the most visible and brilliant reality about the divine existence and deny it in their beliefs and actions.)

With the above Islamic reasoning, it may be easily understood that why in all the divine religions the sentance *"there*

*is no god but God"** was their prime slogan. This reality — the reality of the meanings of prayer — in the Islamic documents, in the *Holy Qur'ân,* and in the traditions have been mentioned repeatedly and explicitly, so that for the thinkers and intellectuals there should not remain least possibility for contradiction or doubt. As an example, we will refer to the following two verses of the *Holy Qur'ân* and a tradition quoted by Imam Jaffar al-Sâdiq (A.S.) as follows:

«اِتَّخَذُوا اَحْبارَهُمْ وَرُهْبانَهُمْ اَرْباباً مِنْ دُونِاللّهِ وَ الْمَسِيحَ بْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَمٰا اُمِرُوا اِلاّٰ لِيَعْبُدُوا اِلٰهاً واحِداً لااِلٰهَ اِلاّٰهُوَ.»

"They have taken as lords beside God, their rabbis and their monks and the Messiah son of Marry, when they were bidden to worship only one God. There is no god save Him. Be glorified from all that they ascribe as partner (unto Him)

— The Holy Qur'an (19: 31), Repentance

«وَالَّذينَ اجْتَنَبُوا الطّاغُوتَ اَنْ يَعْبُدُوها وَاَنابُوا اِلَى اللّهِ لَهُمُ الْبُشْرىٰ.»

"And those who put away false gods, lest they should worship them, and turn to God in repentance, for them there are glad tidings. Therefore give good tidings (Oh Muhammad) to my bond-

* Refer to the *Holy Qur'ân* Surah Al-Araf verses 59 till 158, Surah Hud verses 50 till 84, where the slogan has been proclaimed by some of the great prophets.

men."

— The Holy Qur'ân (39: 17) Zumar

Abu basir narrates the following from Imam Jaffar al-Sâdiq (A.S.), who addressed to the real Shiites of his period:

«روی ابوبصیر عن ابی عبدالله علیه السلام انه قال. انتم هم، ومن اطاع جبارا فقد عبده.»

"You are the ones who have refused to worship the false deities. And whoever has obeyed the command of a despot or tyrant has indeed worshipped him." *

« وَاِيّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ »

"Thee (alone) we worship; Thee (alone) we ask for help."

We do not expect any kind of help or support from your rivals and claimers of divinity. Because of their denial to accept the divinity of God Almighty, they can not be of any help for the seekers and followers of the path of God. The path of God — is the path followed by the prophets — is a source for accomplishing truth, justice, brotherhood, and co-existence for the mankind; and bestows exaltedness upon human-beings, while condemning and negating all sort of prejudices, oppressions and unequal treatments (or preferences shown towards a certain class or group.

How, the rivals of God and claimers of divinity who are

* Tafseer Noor-al-Thaqalayn vol. 5 page 481, also refer to verse 17 of the surah Zumar.

devoted entirely to this shameful worldly existence, and who by their usurping behaviour have not left any stone unturned in their efforts to destroy all the real human values, could be of any help to the bondsmen of God? They are at permanent war and carry a burning wrath against the God's bondsmen (believers).

Therefore, we only seek help from God Almighty; the power of intellect and decision making, incorporated by him in our primordial nature; the ways and means provided for living this life; the natural and historical laws, which if could be understood may act as a guide for our thoughts and actions; and also from all the byproducts of divine power which are His mighty soldiers in the service of mankind.

« اِهْدِنَاالصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ »

"Show us the straight path"

If a man could have a superior and more vital (matter of life and death) aim than the "guidance", certainly that would have been included in the Surah Praise — a surah which is the opening chapter of the *Holy Qur'ân* and forms an important part of the prayer — and it would have been recited as a prayer for acceptance from God. It is by way of His direction or guidance, that the intellect and experience set their course in the correct, advantageous, and suitable position, widening the path of wayfarer. Otherwise, without it, the intellect and experience would turn into a light in the hands of a thief, or a piece of sharp blade in the hand of a mad man.

The straight path is the same primordial destined programme, which has been prepared in accordance with the most accurate estimation regarding the available sources, the needs,

and shortages within the bounds of natural possibilities for the mankind. It is a path opened towards the humanity by the God's prophets who themselves were pioneer searchers and wayfarers on this path. The path if followed by a man could be analogized like a continuous streamlined flow of water over a smooth and straight surface, which by itself and without any interference, without showing any force or power is flowing towards the final destination, which is nothing but the infinite ocean of human exaltedness.

It is a programme if could be implimented and materialized under a just administration to manage the lives of the people, will provide independence, security, benefits, cooperation, self sufficiency, love, brotherhood, and will bring an end to all bitter accidents and tragedies associated with the mankind in their past. But what is this path and programme supposed to be? Every one in this amazed bazzar is a claimer and each group condemns the other. Therefore there must be an indication, in accordance with this brief preface, regarding this straight path, and to specify it from the point of view of Holy Qur'ân.

«صِرٰاطَ الَّذينَ اَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِم»

"The path of those whom Thou has favoured".

Who were the people able to receive rewards from God and were blessed with special favours? There is no doubt that this does not mean the material prosperity, position, and power. Because these were the things possessed by most prominent personalities of the history, who at the same time were worst enemies of God and the people. Therefore, those

desired favours and blessing must be something far deeper than these worldly attractions. That blessing is the special favour, grant, and guidance of God. The blessing of recognition of the real value of the self and to discover again the innerself. The *Holy Qur'ân* describes that special blessing as follows:

«وَمَنْ يُطِعِ اللّه وَالرَّسُولَ فَأُولئِكَ مَعَ الذَّينَ اَنْعَمَ للّه عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيينَ وَالصِدّيقينَ وَالشُّهَداءِ وَالصَّالِحينَ...»

"Who so obeyeth Allah and the messenger, they are with those unto whom Allah hath shown favour, of the prophets and the saints, and the martyrs, and the righteous. The best of the company are they."*

— The Holy Qur'an (4: 69)

Thus, the prayer offerer in this sentence requests for the guidance towards the path of prophets, saints, martyrs, and righteous men. The main illuminated path of the history, a clear visible path with fully defined and determined aims with the famous and well known searchers. Opposite to this, there is another well defined path with its' wayfarers completely identified. Keeping this in mind the prayer offerer warns himself not to follow that path and in continuation of his early recitation, recites the following:

غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ

* Those who proved and confirmed their belief by their actions and deeds and thus were able to witness God and His prophets.

"Not the path of those who earn Thine anger."

Who were the people received the wrath of God? Those who decided to follow the path other than God's not only they selected this wrong path, but were able to lead with themselves by force a group of ignorant, indecisive, and lazy people, and also some aware and determined people, but with their hands chained into captivity, to follow that path.

These were the people, who, all along the history succeeded to control the state of affairs of the masses. Sometimes it was achieved by use of brute force or at other times by using dirty tricks, demagogy, and cheating. The aim was to force the masses to become like indecisive creatures or like a mere tool oppressed into the hands of oppressors and tyrants. Those were the people, who, through the ways of infatuation superimposed themselves upon the masses and thus succeeded to possess resources for their corrupt and filthy pleasure seeking passionate affairs. In other words, these people selected the path of evil not because of ignorance, but they rebelled knowingly for the sake of their selfish passion.

The historical realities show that the religious objectives always took the pioneer steps to demonstrate against the wordly-powerful wealthy-upper classes, and rejected the philosophy of their existence (because it was in conflict with the religious aims and objectives). Apart from these two groups — i.e the one who received God's guidance, and the one who earned His wrath, there exists another third group, who followed eventually the same path followed by the latter group.*

* This topic has been described with a style full of meanings at different occassions in the following verses of the *Holy Qur'an: Surah Poets, verses 91-102. Surah Ibrahim, verses 21-22. Surah Saad, verses 58-61. Surah Ghafer, verses 47-48*

The last sentance of Surah Praise defines this third group as follows:

« وَلَاالضَّالِينَ »

"Nor of those who go astray"

Those, who because of their ignorance, and under the influence of misguided leaders, selected the path other than God's and truth, but imagined that had selected the righteous and straight path. While in reality they were walking on a dangerous misleading path, eventually leading to a bitter and doomful end.

Let us look upon this above-mentioned group in the historical retrospective. These are the people who under the pagan systems, hand foldedly and blindly allowed themselves at the complete disposal of their misguided, deviated leaders, and for the sake of their advantages stoodup against the divine messengers — proclaimers of truth and justice — thus, damaging their positions; and in doing so, they never allowed themselves to ponder over even for an instance and rethink about their foolish acts.

Their above acts could be called unwise or foolish, because they were totally to the advantages of upper classes and on the contrary losses for these deviated ones; just opposite to the invitation of divine prophets, which was beneficial and useful for the deprived masses including these deviated ones, while at the same time it destroyed the existence and prestige of disfavoured people from the roots.

The prayer offerer by remembering these two alternative methodologies or paths (i.e. the path of guided ones and the path of disfavoured ones), must search within his innerself,

and should decide with care, accuracy, and sensitivity the path he must follow and the stand which should be taken by him towards the life-saving message of the divine prophets. Thus at that moment by witnessing the signs of maturity and guidance (of God) in his own life, once again opens his tongue for offering his thanks and greatfullness for that great blessing of God by saying (at the end of Surah Praise) as follows:

«اَلْحَمْدُلِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰالَمِينَ»

*"Praise be to God — Lords of the worlds".**

And in this way he completes an important part of his prayer. This was the preface of the *Holy Qur'ân* (which was recited) and is also called *Fathihatul-Kitab,* the opening of the scripture.

The preface of the *Holy Qur'ân* like the preface of each book indicates the overall essence of the total content of the Holy scripture. As the prayer is a summary or bird's-eye view picture of Islam, and represents many of the prominent parameters or dimensions of the Islamic ideology; likewise Surah "The Opening" lists the prominent points and the real direction of Qur'ânic education and in nutshell contains the summary of important guide-lines in the following manner:

The universe and all the creatures or species are one single unit — totally created by God Almighty — *"the Lord of the worlds." Everybody and everything are under God's kindness and affection. But the believers are blessed with special favours and mercies of God — "the Beneficient and the Merciful."*

The life of man after this world continues and exists in to

* The recital of this sentance is optional

hereafter, where the absolute authority belongs to God — *"the Owner of the Day of Judgement." The man should free himself from bondage of other than God's. Should endeavour to live under the shadow of God's plan with determination and human virtues, upon the path, with freedom and dignity and get help only from Him — "Thee alone we worship. Thee alone we ask for help".*

Man must seek the programme for prosperity and success for walking upon the straight path of life from God — *"Show us the straight path".*

Must identify the front lines of enemies and friends. Should be aware about their views and positions. Should take a conscientious choice about his own path — i.e. *"the path of those Thee hast favoured; not (the path) of those who earn Thine anger nor of those who go astray".*

Chapter — 3

Surah Al-Ikhlas

The Sincerity

After recital of this surah "Praise" which is full of deep learnings and meanings, — prayer offerer must recite another one complete surah from the *Holy Qur'ân*. This refreshes his memory for a part of the Holy scripture selected by his own choice and freewill, or in other words it opens another chapter of the Islamic learnings in front of him.

The obligation of recital of the *Holy Qur'ân* during prayer has been explained in a narration quoted by Imam Ali bin Mousa al-Riza (A.S.). The Imam told to Fazl bin Shazan that the recital of the surahs of the *Holy Qur'ân* during prayer has prevented the Holy scripture from becoming abandoned, ungrasped, and has kept its contents alive in thoughts and

minds.

In our discussion it will be sufficient to discuss the Surah Al-Ikhlas* "The Sincerity" which is normally recited in prayer after recital of Surah Praise.

« بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ »

"In the Name of God, the Beneficient, the Merciful"

« قُلْ »

"Say (Oh! Prophet)"

Know it for yourself and must convey this message to others that

« هُوَ اللّٰه اَحَدٌ »

"He is God, the one!" **

Unlike he gods of deviated ideologies of other religions, He does not have any partners rivals, or equivalents. It means the creation is free of conflict and war between different gods. Rather, all traditions and laws of the universe are arised from the one source of external power, by a single decision. It is because of this force that a coordinated discipline, and homo-

* *Al-Ikhlas*, "The Sincerity" also known as "Al-Tauhid", takes its name from its subject. It has also been called the essence of the Holy Qur'ân. Some authorities ascribe this Surah to the Madinah period, and think that it was received in answer to a question of some Jewish doctors concerning the nature of God. It is generally held to be an early Meccan Surah. [Tr]

** "The one God, the unique God." Therefore, the pronoun "He" is used and recited for dignity.

geneity is maintained through the universe. All the laws, transformations, and natural motions of the universe are moving in one single direction towards one single goal.

Among all of them only man has been given the power of decision and right of determination. He is capable to disobey this divine discipline, and may play a music, in conflict and uncoordinated with other musical instruments, or may sing a melody like a lone singer. Also, he is capable to select to live his life in accordance with these divine commands.

« اَللّٰه الصَّمَدُ »

"God the eternally, Besought of all!"

God is free from everybody and everything. The God Almighty to whom we adore, praise, and pay homage is not like the imaginary gods whose creation, continuity of lives, strength, and living require the help, support, and favour of someone else. Such a god is creature equivalent to man or meeker or a little lower. Man — this magnificient deep creature — will surrender himself, and will adore and praise only a supreme power, which does not require the least want from any other source or element. His being existed, being powerful, and being eternal all depend upon his own essence.

« لَمْ يَلِدْ »

"He begetteth not."

It is not so! the way it has been ridiculously imagined among the deviated religions or polytheist dogmas. He is not like the (imagined) god of Christians and Polytheists who

could be father of a son. He is the One, who creates everything and everyone — and is not their father. All the creatures of this universe (be heavenly or earthly) are his servants — and not his sons or daughters. It is because of this special relationship (bondage vs. divinity) between man and God, which frees the real servants of Him from the slavery of everything and everybody. Because a servant simultaneously could not be owned by two masters.

Those who imagined God as the kind father of the man and other creatures and did not consider the relationship (bondsman vs. divinity) between man and God as something worthy enough for the exalted position of man; in reality opened for themselves the door for the bondage of other than God, and in doing so become slaves of many of the unkind slave-owners of this world, by turning into handpicked tools and possessions of slave-owners and slave producers.

« وَلَمْ يُولَدْ »

"Nor was begotten."

He is not the phenomenon, which did not exist one day, and would become visible in the world of existence the next day. He neither is physically begotten by anyone nor he is the by-product of someone's thought or imaginations. Neither he is produced by a superior military force or superclass, nor he resembles with any form of human life. He is the supreme and most esteemed reality an eternal One, which existed before and will exist forever.

« وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ »

"And there is none comparable unto Him".

He could not be compared to anyone or anything and no one could be found as His rival or equivalent. It is not possible to divide the domain of His influence or His kingdom, which includes the entire universe, between Him and someone else i.e. to consider a part of the world or portion of human life belongs to God and the remaining belonging to someone other than Him. Or to allocate a part of the universe and stage of human life between Him and others; between the gods of alives and gods of deads; or to assign them to the false claimers of godhood and power.

As the name indicates this Surah is in reality the Surah of Monotheism. The philosophy of Monotheism, which has been explained in various tones and different styles, in hundreds of surahs throughout the *Holy Qur'ân;* in this Surah, has been presented in a condensed form and clear-cut manner which overrides the prevelant ridiculous and Polytheistic thinking of that period; denying and negating explicitly all claimers of false godhood — for the last time in the text of the Holy scripture. This Surah introduces the characteristics of God, which from the Islamic point of view deserves to be praised and worshipped not only by the Muslims, but by the entire mankind living in His kingdom.

A god who is not unique, and hundreds and thousands of his look-alike are in abundance among the mankind, is not deserving of divinity or Godhood. A powerful person or a source of power, requiring help and support of other source for his continuation (or existence) does not deserve, and should not be imposed upon mankind. The one, who lowers his head in front of a puppet god, a created being, needy, and fallable; has indeed shamed, lowered the human dignity, and has taken a backward step. This is the positive dimension of

Surah of Monotheism (or Sincerity), which indicateds and distinguishes the characteristics of the Lords of the worlds, and simultaneously negates the existence of puppet gods throughout the history.

On the other hand this Surah warns the Monotheistic worshippers and Muslim believers, not to be curious and indulgent into mental, rational debates regarding God's characteristics and essance, which would lead them to doubts and evil temptations; rather they should seek and remember God by short words in order to get rid of the false claimers of divinity and from their idle talks. Instead of getting trapped into the philosophical puzzling they should ponder over the commitments arising out of the Monotheistic belief.

According to a tradition, narrated by Imam Ali bin al-Hussein (A.S.), since God was aware that the later period of history, would produce curious people, and therefore: He revealed the verses of Surah Iron* till verse *"knower of all that is in the breasts,"* in order to define the boundaries for investigating His essence and characteristics. Therefore whosoever has allowed himself to ponder over beyond these prescribed limits is bound to be doomed."

As if this Surah "say God is One" says to the prayer offerer: God is unique Supreme Power, the Most High, Exalted, the Needless, His Essence beyond description, neither Begets nor Begotten, and there is no one similar to Him or His equivalent. Learned, Seer, Wise ..... etc., and other characteristics of God's essence whose knowledge and awareness is obligatory for Muslims, and are regarded influential and effective in shaping their lives, and ascension of their spirits, have been repeated in other surahs of the *Holy Qur'ân.* Do not

think beyond the limits as already defined in this surah about God's essence and know-how about His characteristics. Rather, concentration should be exerted for performing deeds, which would eventually enlighten the believer in knowing God better.

Do not think that by engaging in lengthy mental debates about His essence — you will achieve more enlightenment. It is not so! Instead, try to achieve this desired enlightenment by bringing purification and spirituality to your innerself, and by practicing the principles of Monotheism in your deeds and actions; and that is the way the prophets, saints, righteous servants of God, pure Monotheists, and gnostics were.

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* *"Iron"*

In the Name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful

Al-Hadid, "Iron" takes its name from a word in v. 25. The reference in the word "victory" in v.10 is undoubtedly to the conquest of Mecca, though Noldeke takes it to refer to the battle of Badr and so would place the surah in the forth or fifty year of Hijrah. The words of the verse are against such an assumption since no Muslims "spent and fought before the battle of Badr, which was the beginning of their fighting."

The date of revelation must be eighth or ninth year of the Hijrah. The first six versus of this Surah referred in the above discussion are as follows:

In the Name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful

1. All that is in the heavens and on the earth glorifieth God; and He is the Mighty, the Wise.

2. His is the Sovereignty of the heavens and the earth He giveth Life and He giveth death; and He is able to do all things.

3. He is the First and the Last, and the outward and the Inward; and He is the Knower of all things.

4. He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in six Days; then He mounted the Throne. He knoweth all that entereth the earth and all that emergeth there from and all that cometh down from the sky and all that ascendeth therein; and He is with you wheresoever ye may be. And God is the seer of what ye do.

5. His is the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth, and unto Allah (all) things are brought back.

6. He causeth the night to pass into the day, and He causeth the day to pass into the night, and He is Knower of all that is in the breasts. [Tr]

Chapter — 4

Tasbihatul — Arba

The Four Praises

Before discussing the hymns and special praises offered during genuflextion and prostration, we will discuss the phrases recited in third and fourth units of the prayer in the standing state. These phrases consist of recital of four invocations (dhikr), describing the four realities about God Almighty:

«سُبْحَانَ اللّٰهِ»

Subhan allahi.

"Glory to God."

«وَالْحَمْدُللّٰهِ»

Wal hamdu lillahi.

"All praises belong to God."

«وَلَاإِلٰهَ إِلَّااللّٰه»

Wala ilahi illallahu.

"and there is no god but God."

«وَاللّٰهُ اَكْبَرُ»

Wallahu akbar.

"and God is Great."

Awareness regarding the above four divine characteristics helps a lot, and has a tremendous influence about the correct and complete understanding of the Monotheism, because each one of the above indicates one body and one facade of the Monotheistic structure.

The aim behind repetition of the above sentences of praises is not only to increase the mental enlightenment, or knowledge, rather understanding of divine characteristics and their continuous repetition, produces a sense of responsibility, whereby one would discharge all duties and obligations paramount to the reality discovered by him.

Overall, apart from the mental boundaries, the Islamic beliefs are supposed to provide motivation for action in the real life. Because irrespective of their theoretical mental dimensions, they are accredited in Islam, for playing a crucial

role in supervising the human lives in individual as well as collective social actions of a society. It is true, that each Islamic belief means recognition of a certain reality, but only those beliefs in Islam are made mandatory that in case of their acceptance and adherence it would initiate a commitment for man by assigning an additional responsibility upon his shoulders.

That is the way the belief about God's, existence supposed to be. The belief in God's existence or non-existence, each one in a special way, brings new options for action in life. Individual or society if indeed believes in God's existence spends its life in a special manner other than those who denies this reality. If a man believed that he and this universe have been created by a supreme source of power based upon His wisdom and knowledge; then he has no choice but to accept that this creation has some purpose and ultimate goal. Thus, he realizes that he too has an important role to play, and is supposed to assume certain responsibility, for accomplishing that aim. This awareness of commitment and responsibility motivates him for making endeavour by accepting higher burden, and in doing so he feels happy and satisfied.

Likewise the belief in resurrection, prophethood, and leadership of infallible Imams *(vilayat ....)* etc.; each one carries a commitment and assign a burden of heavy responsibility upon the shoulders of the believer, and in totality the path, programme, and overall direction of the life are made distinguished for him.

If outwardly it appears that those who believe in these ideological principles, and those who are completely ignorant or do not believe at all, are living an identical and similar lives without least problem or conflict; is due to the fact that the

former group lacks the correct understanding, the degree of their faith is not sound, and do not believe the way it is supposed to be. At the sensitive moments and critical junctures of life the path of real believers separates from the ignorant followers, opportunists and pseudo-believers. Keeping these views in mind we return to discuss the substance and content of the above-mentioned Four Praises *(Tasbihatul - arba)* as follows:

«سُبْحَانَ اللّٰهِ»

subhan allahi

"Glory to God."

God is Holy, free from being associated with someone, from tyranny or oppression, from being created, from doing things against wisdom and advice, from all deficiencies and defects, and all filth which exists among the created beings and all those characteristics associated with them. By reciting this sentence the prayer offerer understands and reminds himself that against what kind of grand-magnificent power — worthy of praise — he has surrendered himself and has offered the prostration.

He realizes that he has humbled himself before a power which is a source of righteousness and absolute perfection. Is it possible that someone who has respected the source of absolute perfection of all goodness, righteousness, and beauty will feel contempt for it? This is what the prayer of Islam is supposed to be. It is to show humility and respect in front of an existence which is like an infinite ocean of perfections goodnesses and manifestations. It is not a humility which would make a human being feel sorry, or would cast down the

degree of his prestige and honour — this would not make him despised or insulted. Can man be defined something other than seeker and appreciator of absolute beauty and perfection?

Therefore, it is only natural that man must put his forehead upon dust in front of such a source of absolute perfection, and must praise and adore that essence with his total existence. This praise and worship leads him towards the path of goodness, beauty and perfection and he accordingly organizes his life's movement in that particular direction.

Those, who have considered the prayer and worship of Islam responsible for human disgrace and abjectness, and compared it to the praising of sources of material powers, unfortunately, did not appreciate and understand this delicate point that: the acts of praising and adoring the goodness and purity in themselves are the most powerful motivation for acquiring these virtues within the prayer offerer; therefore, the recital of "Glory to God" reminds us to aspire about these virtues in our own lives as well.

« وَالْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ »

"Wal hamdu lillahi"

"All praises belong to God".

Throughout the tragic history of mankind, man because of miscellaneous consideration for obtaining small or big privileges, for living few days longer, and in many cases just for the sake of living from hand to mouth; has allowed his tongue for praise and has surrendered himself in humility in front of those who were exactly his equivalent, and by no means were the possessors of superiority or distinction over him. Because man had imagined that the bounties actually belonged to the

bounty-users. In seeking these riches and possessions, he has accepted the bondage of their owners whether be it physical, spritual or in mentel form.

The reminder that all thanks and praises is reserved only for God (and not for anybody else), makes us understand that all blessing (riches, affluence, gifts, favour and bounties) are from Him. Thus, in reality, no one other than God Almighty is the owner of things which would authorize Him to enslave a fellow human being into bondage.

It therefore, teaches to even those who are of rather weak determination, and whose hearts and eyes are seduced for riches and favours, not to attach any importance to the insignificant favours and concessions awarded by the holders of the wordly-power, position, and wealth. They should not consider these things awarded by them, rather the source of all blessings and bounties is God Almighty; and therefore, they should not allow themselves into servitude or bondage for the sake of those little favours or awards, should not tolerate deprivation for there genuine wants, and should consider the hoarders of these bounties as the usurpers or aggressors.

«وَلَاإِلٰهَ إِلَّااللّٰه»

Wala ilahi illallahu.

"and there is no god but God."

This is the slogan of Islam — a slogan which clearly and explicitly reflects in totality the world-view and ideological philosophy of Islamic school — it consists of one negation and one affirmation. Firstly, it negates all false deities, or powers other than God's. It frees everybody from the yoke of slavery of all the devilish powers and cuts off each hand and

shoulder, which try to pull him with different tricks towards the wrong path.

It disassociates man from all sources and systems of power other than God's and from all motivations other than those liked by Him. With this grand denial he free himself from all sorts of humilities, degradations, abjectnesses, and bondages. Then he allows his inner-self to be ruled in accordance with God's will and command, which of course could be felt and executed under His administration in an ideal Islamic society. Such an acceptance and servitude in front of God is not comparable to any other type of servitude.

The servitude of God means to arrange one's life logistic in accordance with His wisdom, and to live under His administration in an ideal Islamic society; whose real direction has been drawn in accordance with the divine commands and also to endeavour with all power and means at one's disposal for materialization of such an ideal God's administration. Since other systems founded upon human intellectual thinking, are not free from factors such as human ignorance, lack of knowledge, croockedness, and most likely selfish motives; can not help man succeed and lead himself towards the desired perfection.

Only Gods administration and Islamic Society, blessed with divine wisdom and providences is programmed according to human needs and requirements, as well as ways and means for fulfilling these requirements; could provide the suitable and favourable environment for the growth of that special creation called "mankind".

"We are not enemies of other systems, rather we are their sympathizers"; these are the words of God's messengers who are the most concerned and sympathetic fatherly figures for

the mankind. They teach to all the builders and designers of dwellings to be occupied by the human beings, or in another word to all the leaders and founders of social systems that: *"man had never succeeded, nor will ever succeed or fulfill his desires in any other forms of ruling except the Monotheistic System administered by God."* History has proved, and we all have witnessed that in ungodly administrations* how the humanity has suffered and how horrible and wretched were the conditions of human beings under their oppressing regimes.

« وَاللّٰه اَكْبَرُ »

wallahu akbar.

"And God is Great".

After negating all the false deities, an ordinary person still entangled by the pagan tendencies feels lonely, stranger, and scared. On one side he witnesses the sudden collapse of all the mighty pagan infrastructures, which were stable till this very moment, and on the other hand paganism like a stable peak of mountain presents itself as a viable alternative, and tries its best to catch his attention. Those very things which he has negated, show their existence before his eyes and makes him scared.

It is exactly at this point that he proclaims: *"**God is Great**"*, Greater than anybody or anything, Greater than all powers and their manifestations and He is beyond description. He is the designer, creator of all the natural and historical traditions, and divine laws of creation of this universe. Thus, the ultimate victory lies with being compatable with these divine laws and traditions, and could only be achieved by being committed to

divine commands. Only the servants of God have been the single victorious front throughout the historical struggle of mankind.

The Prophet Mohammad (p.b.u.h) comprehended and belived his historical reality correctly, and felt it with all the power of his existence. It was because of this, reason that he singlehandedly stood up not only against all the deviated people of Mecca, but resisted the whole world. As it was genuinely expected from such an exalted personality, he resisted and remained steadfast to the extent that he was able to free the deviated caravan of humanity from the bondage of the wordly false powers, and directed it towards its natural path — the path of perfection and human-exaltation.

Someone, who considers himself weak, timid, and indecisive against the possessors of worldly powers, if he could realize that the supreme power belongs to God Almighty; becomes calm, assured, and discovers the ignition of an unprecedent kind of fire within his inner existence, transforming him into the greatest and powerful person instantaneously.

This was the summary of the content of the four sentences recited in standing position during third and fourth units of the prayer.

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* We are presently witnessing the most interesting period of history when the world-order is rapidly changing. The communist-world order which committed the worst kinds of tyrannies and massacred millions of people, and once was proclaimed as a dynamic revolutionary ideology, suddenly disappeared from the world scene.

They offered the excellent slogans and succeeded in brainwashing millions of young people all over the world. As the *Holy Qur'ân* describes the fall of mighty pharaoh, that no eyes in the universe shedded tears at the drowning of the powerful Pharaoh, in our times, similar was the case with

the fall of mighty USSR. In its disappearance, there is a lesson for mankind that other than God's system which is stable, all other systems are as fragile as the house of spider. (Tr)

Chapter — 5

Rukoo, The Genuflexion*

Having recited the verses of the Holy Qur'ân**(in the first and second unit) or the Four Praises *(Tasbihatul-Arba)* (in the third or fourth unit), in the standing position, the prayer offerer enters into the state of Genuflexion; i.e. he bows his head in respect against God Almighty, whose existence is the mountainhead of all the supreme, exalted, and righteous virtues, which could be aspired by a human being.

Genuflexion reflects the human-humility before a power, which he considers superior to himself. Because a Muslim considers God as the most supreme power, he performs Gen-

* Bowing in prayer before the state of Prostration

** Recitation of the verses in standing positions i.e. surahs "the opening" and "the sincerity or another surah", in the first and second units; and recital of "four praises or only surah praise" in the third and fourth-units.

uflexion in front of Him, and since he does not consider anyone other than God superior to himself, he never bows his head in front of any body or anything. At the same time while he has lowered his head in humility in front of God, he also allows his tongue to recite the praise of Him as follows:

«سُبْحَانَ رَبِّيَ الْعَظِيمِ وَبِحَمْدِهِ»

subhana rabbiyal'azimi wabihamdih

* *"Glorified is my Lord, the Cherisher, the Highest with glory".*

This movement accompanied by recital of the above sentence produces a feeling of servitude and bondage in front of God Almighty within the prayer offerer, as well as the others who are witnessing this movement. And since the servant of God could not belongs to anybody else he openly and explicitly announces his honour, dignity, and freedom from the slavery of others.

* Instead of this praise, one may recite the following three times:
Subhanallahi
Glory be to God

Chapter — 6

Sajood, The Prostration

After raising his head from the state of Genuflexion, he is prepared to humiliate himself to the extreme state in front of God Almighty by putting his forehead upon the ground in the state of Prostration. Putting one's forehead upon the ground is the highest degree of human humility, and the prayer offerer considers this much humility appropriate in front of God Almighty.

Because extreme servitude in front of God is tantamount to paying respect and bowing in front of absolute righteousness and absolute beauty. Such humiliation and servitude before anybody or anything other than Him is undesirable and strictly prohibited. Since with this action the jewel or essence of humanity, the most precious commodity in the bazzar of human existence, becomes shattered making a human being

lowered and indignified.

While in the state of Prostration, with his head on the dust, his thoughts submerged in the grandeur of God Almighty, his tongue also coordinates by reciting the following sentence of praise — announcing the interpretation of his action.

«سُبْحَانَ رَبِّيَ الأَعْلَى وَبِحَمْدِهِ»

*subhana rabbiyal a'la wabihamdih.**

"Glorified is my Lord the Cherisher, the Highest with glory".

It is deserving for a man only in front of "an Existence" i.e. God, who is the Most Supreme, Most Decorated, Most Holy .... etc., to praise, worship, and lower himself till the state of Prostration. Thus, Prostration during prayer is not falling down upon dust before an existence who is weak, finite, and incomplete, like bowing down in front of flimsy and hollow worldly powers; rather Prostration means to put your forehead upon dust before a power which is the Supreme, the Holy, and the Magnificent.

The prayer offerer with this act practically declares his obedience and surrender to a wise and seer God, and in reality, before announcing to others, he encourages and reminds his innerself to execute this submission and obedience in his own affairs. It is by this acceptance: "absolute servitude in front of God Almighty" that man makes himself free from the slavery and bondage of everything and everybody and immunes himself from all sorts of imposed enslavements and insults.

The most important influence expected from recitation of

* The prayer offerer may recite the praise "Subhanallah" *Glory to God* three times instead.

praises during the Genuflexion and Prostration stage is that it teaches the prayer offerer that: in front of which existence he must offer absolute surrender and adoration; and simultaneously instructing him to negate and prohibit these acts against anything or anybody except that single Existence. There is a narration* quoted by Imam (A.S.) which describes the relationship between the creator and createdbeing in the state of prostration.

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* « اقرب مايكون العبد الى الله وهو ساجد »

(سفينة البحار، ج 1، ماده سجد)

"The nearest state of communication between God Almighty and His servants is the state of Prostration". — Safinatul Bihar vol -1, Chapter — Prostration

Chapter — 7

Tashahud, The Witnessing

In the second and last units of each prayer, after raising head from the second prostration, the prayer offerer in the sitting position recite three sentences, each one of them reflects a basic reality of the faith. This act of reciting these sentences is called: "the Witnessing" *(Tashahud).* The first sentence consists of declaring "I bear witness that":

The Unity of God Almighty:

« أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لا إِلهَ إِلاَّ اللّٰه »

Ashhadu anla ilaha illallahu.

"I bear witness that there is no god except God."

« وَحْدَهُ »

wahdahu.

"Only He" (is the Lord of the Universe)

Which in other words is described as follows:

« لاشَريكَ لَهُ »

la sharika lah

"He has no partners or associates"

Whatever attractions whether be physical or material objects, or things which succeed in bringing man under their yoke of bondage, forcing him into servitude and obedience, could be rightly described as "god" for that person. Whims and passions, animal desires, greed and lusts, social contacts and systems, each one of them in special ways succeeds in traping a human being into its bondage for providing services; and thus imposed its false godhood* upon that trapped wretched fellow.

There is no god but God negates all these types of servitudes and enslavements, and with the act of *"Tashahud"*, the prayer offerer gives his testimony about this negation, i.e. he accepts that there is only one God, who alone has the right of demanding absolute servitude and obedience, and everybody else other than Him, has absolutely no such rights upon his neck.

If the above logic is accepted by someone, then naturally, he would never allow himself to surrender in front, and accept the godhood of any other existences namely: Human, Animal, Angelic, Organic, Inorganic, and Whims and Passions of self. Of course it does not mean that a Monotheist is against all social commitments and obligations or does not believe in any law or authority at all. Because it is obvious that the social life

is founded upon some inevitable obligations and obedience. Rather, it means that a Monotheist does not believe and tolerate any other order or administration, which is not based upon the divine commands.

In his individual or social life, he is attentive to divine orders; and often, in accordance with God's commands and relevant considerations for the human life in social collective systems, it is obligatory upon him to obey someone in authority, and should also be responsible and committed to social responsibilities and obligations. Thus, obedience and commitments being as characteristics of individual and social life are inseparable from the life of a Monotheist.

But he does not surrender himself to the whims and passions of his rebellious self or to the selfish interests and egotism of individuals who are similar to him. Instead, his obedience is in front of the commands of a wise and seer God Almighty. Because He is the one who prescribes the laws and regulations which should be executed, and appoints the holders of authorities who in turns issue commands in accordance the divine instructions, for God's servants."*

The following verse of the *Holy Qur'ân* explicitly explains

* In this regard please refer to the following verses of the *Holy Qur'ân:*

« مَنْ يُطِعِ الرَّسُولَ فَقَدْ اَطاعَ اللّه. »

Whoso obeyeth the messenger; obeyeth God, and whoso turneth away: we have not sent thee as a warder over them. —The Holy Qur'ân (4: 80 Women)

« اِنَّمٰا وَلِيُّكُمُ اللّٰه وَرَسُولُهُ وَالَّذينَ آمَنُوا الَّذينَ يُقيمُونَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَيُوتُونَ الزَّكٰوةَ وَهُمْ رٰاكِعُونَ. »

Your friends can be only God; and His messenger and those who believe, who establish worship and pay the poor due and bow down (in prayer). —The *Holy Qur'ân* (5: 55 The Table Spread)

the above fact:

«اَطیعوُاللّٰه وَاَطیعوُالرَّسُولَ وَاوُلِی الْاَمْرِمِنْکُم»

"Obey God, and Obey the messenger and those of you who an in authority."

— The Holy Qur'ân (4: 59 Women)

And probably it is for the reflection of this reality that we recite the second sentence in Tashahud as follows:

«وَاَشْهَدُاَنَّ مُحَمَّداً عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ»

Wa ashadu anna Muhammadan abduhu wa rasuluh.

"And I bear witness that Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) is His prophet."

Acceptance of Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) as the messenger is the acceptance of God's representative or vicegerent or in other words, to search the path of God by following the footsteps of Muhammad (p.b.u.h.), and to receive the divine commands through His appointed servant. There were plenty of God's worshippers, who unfortunately made blunder in identifying the path desired by Him. Acceptance of Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) as His prophet explicitly defines the direction for actions and endeavoures. Such movement is desirable in a

believer's life to prove his true commitments for worshipping God.

In the above sentence by using the word servant or a slave before the word prophet, special emphasis has been attached to the servanthood of Muhammad (p.b.u.h.). It seems as if the aim was to introduce the most supreme and important characterstic of Islam, which indeed is: *"All human virtues may be summarized in being the real sincere slave of God. In accordance with the Islamic beliefs the one who is ahead of the others in this field, is the heaviest on the balance or scale of humanity.*

The one who is aware of the meanings of being God's slave, does not require the logical or rational explanation to support the above reality. If bondage to God means to surrender in front of infinite wisdom, insight, blessing, righteousness, and beauty, and is accompanied with freedom from the slavery of self and from everything and everybody other than God. Could there be any virtue superior to this? Is it not true that all the evilness, degradation, wretchedness, meanness, cowardice, and darkness result from the bondage of man to the rebellion of his self *(Nafs)*. Is it not true that bondage to God Almighty, destroys and burns the roots of all other sorts of servitude.

The above-mentioned two sentences recited in *Tashahud* contain a very delicate and exact point, which is: the prayer offerer takes a testimony about the unity of God and about the prophethood, i.e. he witnesses that ***there is no god but God,*** and further confirms the servanthood and prophethood of Muhammad (p.b.u.h.). This testimony in reality, means the acceptance of all the commitments and obligations related to the above two beliefs.

As if the prayer offerer with this testimony wants to say: that I am willing to assume all the responsibilities upon my shoulders resulting from the above two beliefs; Unity of God *(Towheed)*, and prophethood *(Nabuwwat)*. An inspid and hollow knowledg without commitment, belief, and action does not possess any value from the Islamic point of view. To witness a reality means, to stand for it and acceptance of all commitments, responsibilities, and obligations resulting therein, an acceptance arising out of a pure, sincere, and positive belief. Thus, the recital of *Tashahud* in prayer is like taking an oath of allegiance by the prayer offerer before the God Almighty and His prophet.

The third sentence of *Tashahud* is a request and a supplication *(Dua)* as follows:

«اَللّٰهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلٰى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِ مُحَمَّدٍ»

Allahumma salli'ala Muhammadin wa aale Muhammad

"Oh God, bless Muhammad and his progeny"

Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) and his holy progeny are the perfect and complete manifestations of this school of thought. Prayer offerer by reciting this supplication makes refreshing his memory about those perfect ideals, and by praising them strengthens his spiritual union with them.

The followers of each school or ideology, if do not see the real models or perfect manifestations of that particular school of thought, are likely to follow the wrong courses and may get lost. It is therefore, by such live presentation of the real manifestations, that has insured the permanency of the school of divine prophets throughout the course of time. The history

bears witness that there were many ideologues or thinkers, who for assuring the superior and prosperous life for the mankind presented various schemes and designs of "utopian perfect city" *(Madina-Fazila)*, and wrote voluminous books writings in support of their proposals.

But the divine prophets, instead of indulging themselves in philosophical debates, presented their designs by their actions. By presenting themselves as perfect models, as well as showing the noble deeds of their prime disciples, the prophets succeeded to produce ideal perfect human beings *(Insan-e-Kamil)*, upon whose shoulders rested the structure of the divine schools; and this was the reason that the schools of prophets remained immortal forever, while nothing except some writings and impressians on the pages of books were left from the plans and designs of those great philosophers and thinkers.

The prayer offerer for Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) and his holy progeny, who were the most ideal manifestations of this school, sincerely offers supplications. He sends greetings to the ones, who spent their entire lives as ideals of this school, and presented the balanced perfect human beings of Islam to the history. The prayer offerer sends salutations and blessing for them and requests the same from God Almighty. In this way he tries to strengthen his spiritual union with them; the union which provides a powerful force and motivates him to follow the path and ideals so cherished by them.

Sending blessings and salutations for Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) and his holy progeny means to pay homage to the most ideal, perfect, and selected personalities of Islam. With manifestations of these ideals and perfect individuals in the eyes of his mind, a Muslim could always identify the path he

should follow, and make himself ready for moving in that direction.

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* Refer to the following verses of the *Holy Qur'ân:*

«اَفَرَأَيْتَ مَنِ اتَّخَذَ اِلٰهَهُ هَوٰيهُ»

i) *Hast thou seen him who maketh his desire his god, and God sendeth him astray purposely and sealeth up his hearing and his heart, and setteth on his sight a covering? Then who will lead him after God (hath condemned him). Will you not then heed?*

— The Holy Qur'ân (45: 23 Crouching)

«و...مٰا اُمِروُا اِلاّ لِيَعْبُدُوا اِلٰهاً وٰاحِداً...، پس از اين جمله: اِتَّخَذُوا اَحْبارَهُمْ وَرُهْبانَهُمْ اَرْباباً مِنْ دُونِ اللهِ

سوره توبه، آيه ۳۱»

ii) *They have taken as lords besides God their rabbis and their monks and the Messiah son of Marry, when they were bidden to worship only one God. There is no god save Him. Be He glorified from all that they ascribe as partner unto Him.*

— The Holy Qur'ân (9: 31 Repentance)

«وَقٰالَ فِرْعَونَ يٰا اَيُّهَاالْمَلاُمٰا عَلِمْتُ لَكُمْ مِنْ اِلٰهٍ غَيْرِى»

iii) *And Pharaoh said: "O chiefs! I know not that ye have a god other than me, so kindle for me (a fire), O Haman, to bake the mud; and set up for me a lofty tower in order that I may survey the god of Moses; and lo! I deem him of the liars."*

— The Holy Qur'an (28: 30 The Narration)

Chapter — 8

Salam, The Salutation

The salutation in prayer consists of sending three greetings* and of course it is accompanied with the Name and remembrance of God. Thus, the prayer starts in the Name of God and ends with the Name of God, and between the begining and the end, there is nothing except remembrance of God and His Name. If there is a sentence praising the prophet and his holy progeny, even this is accompanied with the remembrance of God, and seeking His help through His blessings and favours. The first sentence is a salutation by the prayer offerer to the Prophet and God, seeking His blessings and favours upon him:

* Out of these three, only the last one is mandatory. The other two are optional.

« اَلسَّلامُ عَلَيْكَ اَيُّهَاالنَّبِيُّ وَرَحْمَةُاللّٰهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ »

Assalamu alayka ayyuhan' nabiyyu wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuh.

"Peace be upon you, oh Apostle, and the mercy and blessings of God be upon him."

Prophet is the founder of Islam. He is responsible for all the actions, efforts, and endeavoures for the sake of this movement, which are also cherished by the prayer offerer. He was the proclaimer of Monotheism and shook the conscience of the world, and laid down the foundation of a decent life for the mankind for ever. He was the designer of the perfect Islamic man, and the perfect Islamic society which will continue to produce such ideal personalities. Now the prayer offerer with his prayer and the relevant lessons and guidance therein, reflects the same slogan in his own life for his own environment and period. He takes a giant step towards that superior and perfect society prescribed by that exalted personality (the prophet).

Therefore, it is natural that, when the prayer offerer is about to finish this act, remembers the Propeht with a salutation and regards, who has guided him towards this path and has been his leader throughout the journey; and in this manner he announces his presence along with him, and on his path. In the second sentence of salutations, the prayer offerer sends his regards and greetings upon himself his fellow combatants, and upon all the righteous servants of God:

« اَلسَّلامُ عَلَيْنَا وَعَلٰى عِبَادِاللّٰه الصَّالِحِين »

As salamu alayna wa ala ibadillahis - salihin

"Peace be upon us and all righteous servants of Good"

Therefore, in this way, he keeps the memory of God's righteous servants alive in his mind; and the feeling of their presence and existence provides him strength and energy.

In a world where the manifestations of sin: abjectness, ugliness, savageries, tyranny, defilement, and uncleanness have overtaken every place and everybody; where, looking from the eyes of an intelligent, aware, and conscious person, the present environment presents a picture of total bankruptcy of all human values. Where the emptiness, hollowness, and fatigue is covered by artificial glittering. In a world, where the just and truth seeking voices are silenced by the disgracing deeds of selfish and ambitious persons, where the positions hold by noble personalities such as Imam Ali (A.S.), Imam Hussein (A.S.), and Imam Sadiq (A.S.) are filled with the demagogic uproar of persons like Muawiyeh, Yazid, and Mansoor; and in summary, in a world where the worthy sons of Satan have occupied all the places once held by the righteous servants of God.

In such state of affairs is there any hope or expectation that righteousness and goodness would have any chance to prevail? Can any other thing except sin, defilement, disappointment, and injustice be expected from the human beings? One must accept that if there is a possibility to change things it can not be done easily.

Greetings and salutations to the worthy and righteous servants of God, who under such dark environment provide comforts and take care of all the hopeless and heartbroken

people. As if it is like a glad tidings for bright light arising out of the heart of total darkness. It promises the prayer offerer about the existence and presence of other fellow combatants. It tells him: You are not alone in this dry desert, you may find fruitful and long lasting sprouts. As always is the case in the history, that the extremely deviated and corrupt societies, were also the birth places of the most determined, will-powered and famous reformers, who laid down the foundation for a new refreshing life-giving ideologies, and established new systems in the midst of all that hoplessness and darkness.

Even now, in accordance with the historical divine traditions, the same enlightened forces of righteousness and goodness, in the midst of this world full of darkness and corruption are involved actively. Yes! the righteous servants of God, who consider God worthy and deserving for worship, follow His command and confront and resist the false claimers of godhood *(Taqhoot)*.

Who are these decent servants of God and where can they be found? Should not a lesson be learned from them and should not they be accompanied in their forward march? Yes. When the prayer offerer placed himself along with these worthy individuals and sends greetings for himself as well as for themselves; a ray of pride, honour, and assurance shines in his heart. He tries his best truely to join their rank to place himself along with them, and since he could not march step by step along with them, feels sorry about it; this feeling bestows upon him a fresh commitment and obligation.

What types of individuals are these worthy righteous servants and what is worthiness supposed to be? Worthiness does not mean simply offering prayers only. Worthy man is one, able to discharge heavy divine responsibilities in a proper

manner, as befitting and as expected from a sincere servant of God. In other words he may be compared to an ideal student in a class. An ideal worthy student is supposed to do his homework well. In the end in the third sentence, the prayer offerer sends greeting to the same worthy servants (to the angles or other prayer offerers) as follows:

« اَلسَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَةُاللّٰهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ »

Assalamu 'alaykum wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuh.

"Peace be upon you, and the mercy and blessing of God."

Therefore, in this manner the prayer offerer reminds himself about the goodness and worthiness (or angelic virtures or union with other prayer offerers), and thus, finishes his prayer by offering supplications and greetings for his respected audience.

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